

**To: The Honorable Beth Bye, Senate Chair
The Honorable Roberta Willis, House Chair
The Honorable Toni Boucher, Senate Ranking
The Honorable Timothy LeGeyt, House Ranking
Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee**

From: Carolyn McKenna, Board of Trustees

**Re: Higher Education and Employment Advancement Public Hearing
*S.B.1011, AN ACT CONCERNING A REORGANIZATION OF CONNECTICUT'S
SYSTEM OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION***

Date: March 10, 2011

Good morning, members of the committee,

Each year the Board of Trustees Academic Policies and Student Affairs Committee reviews between 75-100 programs:

- Approving new programs proposed by the colleges
- Modifying existing programs to ensure currency with employer and student demand, particularly in relation to advances in technology
- Terminating programs that have few enrollments or that no longer relate to employment opportunities in a changing economy.

Very few other institutions terminate programs as Community Colleges do, illustrating the Board's concern for relevancy and currency of curriculum. Curriculum often tends to be traditional and static in most of higher education – metaphysical poets rarely change.

The Board's decisions on programs include consideration of market demand, job opportunities, student needs, and the needs of business and industry for a skilled workforce. New program proposals are reviewed to avoid duplication with other college programs in Connecticut, and for organic fit with the college's existing curriculum and resources. Over the last several years, most new programs have been implemented through the reallocation of resources or through grant funding received from the US Department of Labor for Community Based Job Training. Since 2005 the Connecticut Community Colleges have received 4 highly competitive grants from the US Department of Labor to expand programs that match the state's education and training needs in areas such as Nursing and Allied Health, Manufacturing, and Energy.

- Figures from the Department of Labor on the wage increases enjoyed by graduates of programs targeted in the Allied Health grant show a 144% increase in earnings from 2005 to 2008 with student earnings going from \$23,626 to \$57,740 within six months of graduation.

New and responsive programs recently approved by the Board include:

- Alternative Energy Transportation Technology
- Alternative Energy Systems Technology
- Building Efficiency and Sustainable Technology

Clean Water Management Technology
Electro-Mechanical Technology
Entrepreneurial Studies
Environmental Science
Nursing
Railroad Engineering Technology
Solar Technology
Sustainable Energy
Sustainable Facilities Management
Sustainable Landscape Design and Conservation

Both programs and student services are reviewed on a regular cycle for accreditation, to evaluate effectiveness and to ensure currency with changing technology and changing student needs. Under the auspices of the Board and its Academic Policies Committee, ongoing refinement of academic programs, collaboration with high schools on the transition to college level study, and expanded opportunities for transfer, all focus on meeting student and state needs. Without a Board with a deep understanding and commitment to student needs, curriculum will not be as responsive to changes in the State's economy and job requirements. Recent news coverage on the New England region's economy indicates that "an entire generation of men may never return to work even as the economy improves and jobs become available because they lack the education and skills required by the region's economy." *CBS News Radio – 3/7/11.*

While many of our students face enormous socioeconomic disadvantages, we need them to be productive and engaged in the Connecticut workforce. Without higher education, these students will be lost and we will have lost a valuable resource for our State and our country. This week, Yale President Richard Levin cited the valuable role played by Gateway Community College in New Haven in preparing the Connecticut workforce. He noted the responsiveness of Gateway to Yale's interest in locating spinoff biotechnology companies around the Yale campus. "Gateway responded immediately [to this Yale initiative] by creating an associate degree program in biomedical engineering. The flexibility and responsiveness of our community colleges is a tremendous asset for the nation." *Richard C. Levin, President, Yale University, 2011 Atwell Lecture, March 6, 2011.*

We need your help to keep the doors of Community Colleges open to the students who will be marginalized unless they have access to the education and skills they need to improve their lives and the lives of their families.

A remote Board of Regents, as proposed in SB 1011 will never be as attuned to non-traditional learners, to their differences, their different needs, and the development of Connecticut's workforce. While the Board of Trustees shares many of Governor Malloy's goals for higher education, we respectfully recommend that careful consideration be given to potential losses, particularly for students, in what appears to be a reorganization scheme with few details and little attention to planning and analysis.

Across the country, states are turning to community colleges to increase the numbers of college graduates entering the US economy to provide a competitive advantage in the global economy. I urge you to do the same in Connecticut, and I pledge that the Board of Trustees for Community Colleges stands ready and well-prepared to help.